



# Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom, 100 Dexter Ave. N/remote via WebEx

Thursday, July 14, 2022

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

## Attendance

Present: Stafford Mays, Marlon Herrera (co-chair), Jessica Farmer (co-chair), Amy Brockhaus, Davon Thomas, Justin Umagat, Sophia Faller

Presenters: Todd Burley (SPR), Nich Johnson (SPR), Christiana Farrell (SDOT)

SPR Staff: Christopher Williams, Michele Finnegan, Paula Hoff, Benjamin Burtzos

## Welcome

Commissioner Farmer calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and gives land recognition.

Introduction of Commissioners and Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff.

## Public Comment

Markeith Pilot – Green Lake Inner Loop – Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) [11.40.250](#) prohibits street usage of roller blades or similar devices. Additionally, SMC [11.40.255](#) gives pedestrians the right-of way in any type of encounter. Bikes can use the street, but since the SDOT commuter loop is unfinished and the Green Lake Outer Loop is unpaved, this creates a legal problem for anyone wishing to skate at Green Lake. Additionally, survey reporting inappropriately combined bikes with skates, resulting in misleading data. Given all of these concerns, I hope that a reconsideration of the Inner Loop policy would be possible, if not necessary.

Michael Dougherty – Green Lake Inner Loop – My son has a rare neurological condition that limits his ability to walk, talk, and run. He is a big fan of exercise, particularly riding his trike at Green Lake. He rides at less than 7 mph and has done so for years. No other safe riding location in the city is accessible to our son without the need for us to drive him there. SPR did give him special permission to continue riding at Green Lake, which is wonderful, but this should be unnecessary; Title II of the ADA requires equal access for persons with disabilities without special permission. Please reconsider a speed limit and improved lane marking on the Inner Loop Path at Green Lake.

Amy Avnet – Green Lake Inner Loop – The wheels restriction policy has killed the life of the Park and needs to be reversed. The standard answer given in response to inquiry is offensive and shows SPR's disdain for the community. Additionally, the path use survey was given to commuters regarding traffic, not park users regarding park use.

Greg McCaslin – Green Lake Inner Loop – Only the Inner Loop allows a safe place for a skater to fall safely into the grass. The Outer Loop would force skaters to fall into traffic. Please reconsider the wheels ban on the Inner Loop.

Jim MacBride – Green Lake Inner Loop – I have seen several unsafe situations around the Outer Path, particularly regarding young bicyclists in or near traffic lanes on busy streets such as Aurora. I am also a roller blader, and Green Lake is one of the premier skating destinations in the city. SMC [18.12.040](#) section G specifies that any restrictions on path use only be enacted to the extent that enjoyment of the path is impaired by lack of regulation. This is not the case in Green Lake. I recommend finding a solution, as this is an untenable situation, particularly for children.

Trip Allen – Green Lake Inner Loop – Pedestrians are the primary cause of incidents on the path. Many are disrespectful and incidental, and confusing signage exacerbates the problem. Better, more intuitive signage placed more regularly could have prevented much of this confusion.

Jim MacConnell – Green Lake Inner Loop – It is beyond time to reverse the discriminatory policy prohibiting wheeled users at Green Lake. The new policy has killed the Park. I fear it is too late to undo the damage this policy has caused.

## **Superintendent's Report**

Welcome Board members, staff, and members of the public.

It's with mixed feelings that I announce that former Recreation Division Director Justin Cutler has accepted a new position as Commissioner of Parks & Recreation for the City of Atlanta, Georgia. Justin has provided stellar leadership to the Recreation Division and the department through the pandemic and as we reopened programming and facilities. I want to extend our sincere congratulations to Justin. We wish him and his family the best in his journey to the City of Atlanta.

With Justin's departure I have appointed Daisy Catague, Recreation Division Deputy Director, as the Interim Recreation Division Director through the recruitment hiring and onboarding of the next Superintendent. I know Daisy will do a great job!

Gas Works Park Fireworks cleanup: Gas Works Park hosted the return of the Amazon Seafair Summer Fourth attended by tens of thousands of people. On Tuesday, July 5th, SPR staff from several districts worked together to quickly clean the park. By 10 am the park was clean again!

Thank you to the Seattle Conservation Corps! A shout out to the Seattle Conservation Corps for their consistently great work. Pictured here is the crew that helped our grounds crews beautify the Garfield Community Center campus including mulching tree beds and raking grass. The Seattle Conservation Corps, established in 1986, is a unique Parks and Recreation program that provides employment for people experiencing homelessness. The program gives homeless adults opportunities to train and work in a structured program that provides them with job skills and carries out projects that benefit our community members and our environment.

Big Day of Play - Save the Date! Big Day of Play is a celebration of our city's diversity, and it encourages neighbors, communities, and families to have fun, build relationships and be active together. Big Day of Play

will be held on Saturday, August 20 from 12 to 6 p.m. at Rainier Playfield and online. The event is free and includes activities for all ages and abilities. The event will showcase a wellness fair, in-person and virtual programs, and live performances.

Summer Recreation: we are in the midst of our peak season.

- Aquatics: All outdoor pools, 20 of 22 wading pools, 9 of 10 spray parks and 6 of 9 lifeguarded swim beaches are all open for the summer, despite some staffing shortages, particularly at the lifeguard position.
- The week of June 27th we launched Summer Camps across 20+ sites.
- The Summer Playground Program began at 3 parks instead of the planned 10 due to AmeriCorps staffing challenges. We are working to open additional parks in the week of July 25th.
- The Summer of Safety Program started last week and will operate at 10 community center sites across the city. We offer a summer meal, activities, and field trips for tween & teens.

Maintenance surge: After two and a half years of pandemic-related staffing impacts, SPR has recently hired more than 50 new park maintenance employees to help ramp up maintenance across our system over the next 6 to 8 weeks including mowing, trash pickup, restroom maintenance, graffiti removal, lighting repairs and grounds maintenance.

2022 Downtown (Center City) Parks summer events: SPR and partners will host a variety of free events and activities at downtown (Center City) parks this summer. Offerings include outdoor movies at Cascade Playground, music and dancing at Pier 62, family fun evenings at Freeway Park, and Chinese dance classes at Hing Hay Park. All events are free for the community.

Grand Re-Opening Volunteer Park Amphitheater: I'm thrilled to announce the grand reopening of the recently renovated Volunteer Park Amphitheater and the start of the Summer Series produced by Volunteer Park Trust that runs from July to August 18th. The Summer Series features six free shows and performances on Thursday evenings, July 14 to August 18, from 6:00-8:30 pm. Please join us.

Former Bullitt Estate park planning: SPR's Planning Unit has started the public engagement and design process for a new park on Capitol Hill at 1125 Harvard Ave. E., the site of the former Bullitt Estate that was donated to the City after the death of Kay Bullitt. A press release went out on June 13th, and we've already heard from over 500 neighbors. A virtual public meeting will be held later this summer to start the design conversation for a park vision and plan.

Park District process at City Council: The City Council has begun its deliberation and public process on the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners' funding recommendations. On Friday, June 24, the City Council met as the Park District Board. Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners Co-Chair Marlon Herrera presented a high-level summary of the BPRC's Park District Cycle 2 recommendations. Kudos to Marlon for an excellent presentation!

The Council then began its review of those recommendations, a process that will continue throughout the summer. The Council held a public hearing earlier today (July 14), beginning just an hour ago.

In other City Council presentations:

In June, the Full Council approved the Montlake Playfield Agreement and the Vending Machine Agreement.

We were also asked by CM Lewis to provide briefings at parks committee meetings:

- July 6: Pools/Beaches (which went very well!)
- August 3: Off-Leash Areas
- August 17: Bathrooms/Comfort Stations

All of these meetings are available for public viewing on the Seattle Channel.

I'd be glad to answer any questions Board members may have.

The Board has no questions for Superintendent Williams.

## **Presentation on Green Lake Outer Loop Bike Path**

Superintendent Williams provides a brief introduction of the decisions and policies that led to this point regarding the Green Lake Outer Loop project and its impact on the Green Lake Inner Loop. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board decided to restrict use of the Inner Loop to one-way pedestrian traffic to encourage and enable social distancing. Shortly thereafter, another decision was made to allow two-way pedestrian traffic and simultaneously to further restrict wheeled uses of the path. During that time, SDOT was studying a commuter bike trail around the park and has now begun construction around both the East and West side of the park. The previous Board elected to pause any further decisions while SDOT conducted its study.

Todd Burley (SPR) and Christiana Farrell (SDOT) lead the presentation.

Today's presentation is a planned update requested by the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners in fall of 2021. We will have an update on the Outer Loop project, an engagement summary from SDOT, a feedback summary from SPR, and discuss potential next steps.

Burley provides brief background on the Inner Loop, unpaved Perimeter Path, and SDOT bike lane ("Outer Loop"). The initial rules changes occurred between March and December of 2020 under emergency guidelines. Currently, no wheeled users are permitted on the Inner Loop except for accessibility vehicles and strollers. Back in October 2021, the BPRC voted to keep this use in place and wait for follow up in July.

Farrell outlines the scope and current state of the Outer Loop project. This project was driven by a desire to decrease serious and fatal accidents, especially along Aurora Avenue. SDOT also wanted to leverage recent investments to create more space for people to walk, run, roll and bike to reduce emission, and to expand access to park. Previous projects have addressed bike and pedestrian accessibility on the east and south sides of the park.

The proposed Segment 1 (Aurora Ave N) bike lane expansion is planned for an area of Aurora Ave that does not host transit routes, and thus carries a decreased traffic load. Segment 2 would follow Green Lake Drive N and link back up with existing bike lane; vehicle traffic would convert to one-way traffic. Coordination is ongoing with other organizations, including with Seattle City Light. There are potential impacts to some parking lot access and driveways; design is at about 30% and we are still figuring all of this out. The goal is to begin construction in September.

Significant public outreach between virtual open houses and online survey responses. Caveat that the target audience for survey was primarily interested in transportation, rather than park use. Concerns heard about parking, traffic, safety improvements, and access to Green Lake for recreational purposes rather than commuting. Most respondents to SDOT survey supported separate paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. The survey did provide room for comment and nuance; Farrell shares a breakdown of these comments.

Burley shares community feedback to SPR. The majority of feedback has been in opposition to the restrictions on the Inner Loop. There is appreciation for a pedestrian only path; there is also recognition that not all wheeled users are the same, and that pedestrians do instigate conflicts over path use.

Potential next steps: either continue with status as-is and re-evaluate after completion of SDOT project or ask SPR to return with a policy change sooner and revisit this issue in an upcoming meeting.

Brockhaus thanks Burley and Farrell for the presentation and affirms that the new bike lanes are outstanding for transportation. Brockhaus suggests differentiating wheeled users to make more nuanced conversation (i.e., strollers and ADA uses/skaters/bicyclists should be discussed separately somehow). Is there a way to discuss speed limits for slow vs. fast bicyclists?

Herrera inquires as to the funding and timeline of Segments 1 and 2 construction, and thanks Farrell and SDOT for improving the safety around Green Lake. Herrera voices a desire to see a plan that addresses the needs of users with disabilities more plainly; he avers that people respond to design much more than they respond to posted signs.

Mays inquires about usage volume pre-pandemic as opposed to now. Burley says there has not been any comparative study, just anecdotal evidence.

Farmer states her preference to hear an updated presentation and recommendation sooner, rather than later. Herrera concurs, emphasizing his priority topics of accessibility concerns and young children on bikes.

The Board requests an updated recommendation regarding the Green Lake Inner Loop usage restriction prior to the completion of SDOT construction.

## **Presentation on Updates to Tree Management Policy**

Superintendent Williams provides context. This policy change has been in the works for several years.

Todd Burley and Nich Johnson (SPR) lead the presentation.

The current policy is over 20 years old and enumerates practices that are no longer consistent with best practices, current environmental values, and equity considerations. It was against this backdrop that the new draft policy was created.

SPR received feedback from SPU, SDOT, OSE, SDCI, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, and the Urban Forestry Commission regarding the draft policy. In addition, SPR reached out to Got Green, the Duwamish Tribe, and the Community Land Conservancy for additional feedback. We would like to engage and hear back from a greater number of community stakeholders.

The draft policy is updated in several ways. First, it follows an updated policy template, including updated department names, definitions, and references. Second, we consolidated our management framework criteria, focusing on safety, park function, urban forest health, and equitable distribution of services.

The following changes have been made:

- Specific description of procedures and practices have been replaced with ANSI A300 industry standards
- Reference to phasing work has been removed
- Clarified policy regarding property lines
- Expanded language regarding viewpoint trimming
- Clarified new permit system
- Addition of tree protection language for recreational use
  - Webbing requirements for hammocks and slacklines
  - Individual use vs. commercial use
  - Climb at your own risk
- General tree protection language added
  - Do nothing that damages trees
  - Protect during construction
  - Change park use, rather than removing or relocating trees
  - Added maintenance practices to protect trees
- Alignment with other policies and Seattle Municipal Codes
- Climate resiliency planning, especially around establishment of trees
- Supporting habitat benefits highlighted
- Enforcement aligned with SDCI

Umagat asks about tree relocation practices in policy. Johnson clarifies that this process is rare and generally only occurs with very young trees.

Mays asks if private residents prune trees either in permitted or non-permitted manners. Johnson explains that this does occur and is one of the reasons for drafting the new policy. Tree trimming companies should be aware of their scope of work and not trim trees on public land. Williams points out that this sort of activity could result in the City choosing to bring suit against a tree-trimming company. Burley explains that the process for trimming trees for public request has become much more conservative in the past few years.

Farmer asks how the new draft policy compares to other City departments' policies. Burley admits that he has not reviewed all the policy page by page, but the feedback received from SDCI, SDOT, and SPU indicated no contradictions between the policies.

Farmer asks Johnson if the guidelines in the new policy provide arborists with enough guidance to perform their work. Johnson answers with a confident yes. The guidelines are flexible enough to allow for managerial decision making but provide sufficient framework.

The Board and SPR staff anticipate a public hearing and vote on whether to recommend the new policy at the August 11, 2022, Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners meeting.

## **Old & New Business**

Farmer asks for clarification regarding COVID-19 recovery allocation funds in BPRC's recommendations for Park District funding. Williams clarifies that SPR built in \$10 million to the Park District recommendation as a guard for any impact to the General Fund. Finnegan adds that this \$10 million were bracketed aside from the recommendations of the BPRC; this decision came from SPR, not the Board.

Farmer asks for motion to approve agenda for 7/14/22 BPRC meeting and minutes from 6/9/22 meeting. Brockhaus moves; Herrera seconds. There is no discussion. The vote is unanimous in favor of approving the motion.

*Adopted: June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, BPRC Meeting Minutes; July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, BPRC Meeting Agenda*

There being no further business, Commissioner Farmer adjourns the meeting at 8:13 pm.